

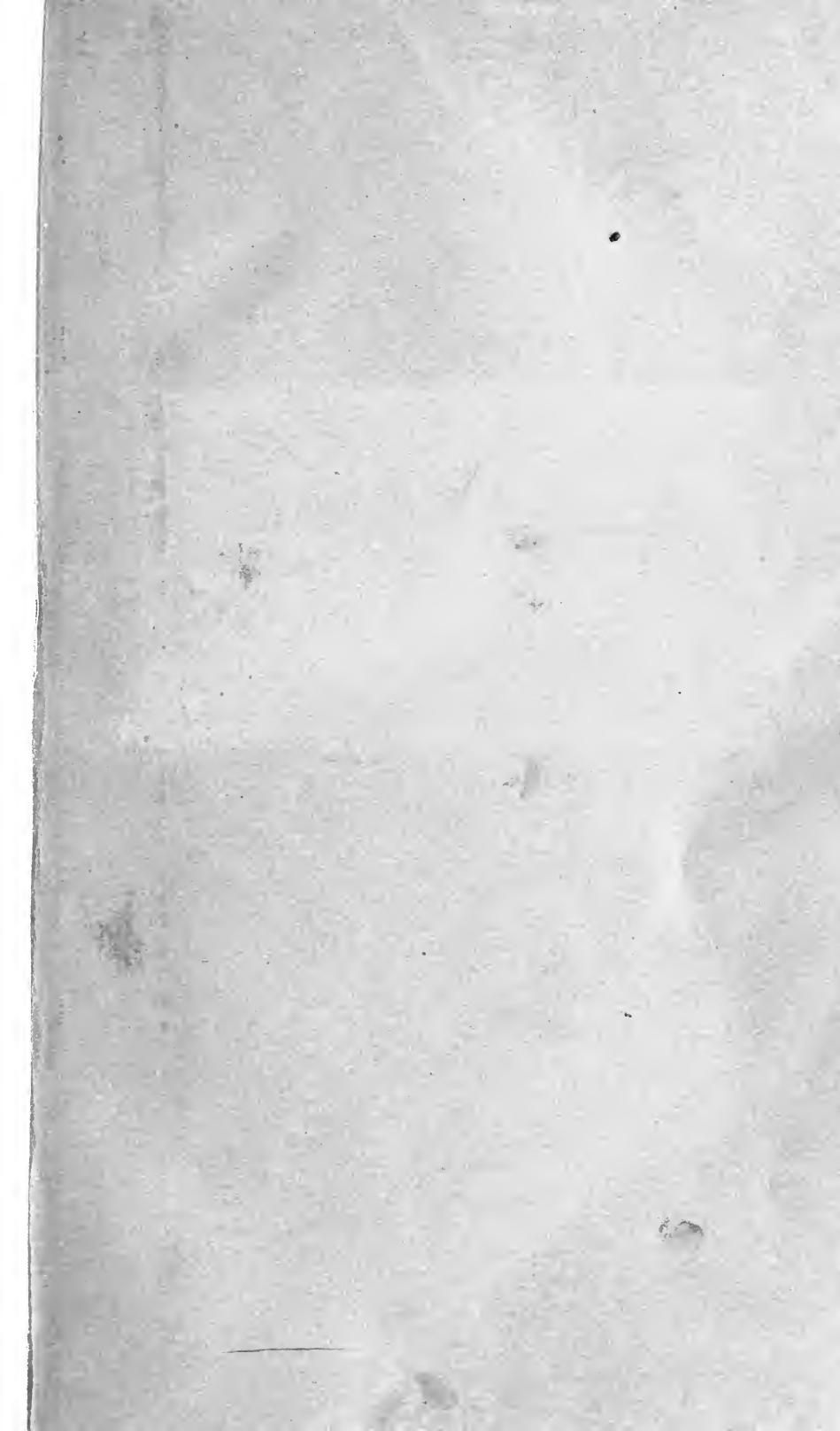


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GIFT OF

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RELATION OF M. PENICAUT.

INTRODUCTORY NOTE.

BY REV. EDWARD D. NEILL.

A friend of the navigator HUMPHREY GILBERT, a man of sanguine expectations, three centuries ago, remarked that he hoped to live to see the day when a letter mailed in London on the first of May, would reach China by midsummer, and that the Indians had asserted that a short and speedy route would be found between the 43d and 46th degrees of north latitude.¹

The coming event cast its shadow before, and year after year, explorers, propelled in frail canoes by hardy voyageurs, pushed up the rivers that ran into the Atlantic, and at last reached the shores of the great Mediterranean sea of North America, Lake Superior.

It is appropriate that the Minnesota Historical Society should gather every document that will throw light on the slow but sure progress of discovery west of Lake Superior toward the Pacific coast. Too little notice has been given to the Frenchmen, who in 1659 visited the Sioux of Mille Lacs. The name of one of whom, GROSELLIER, was retained for many years on the maps as the designation of a stream that flows into Lake Superior, and is a part of the northern boundary of Minnesota.² Learning the inland route to Hudson's Bay, GROSELLIER and his companion REDISSON returned to Quebec in the summer of 1660, and urged upon the French to open trade with the center of the continent, but the offer not being embraced, they tendered their services to the English, and piloted a New England Captain named GILLAM to the River Nemiscan, where Fort Rupert was built.

1. Col. State Papers. East India. London 1862, p. 86.

2. On a map of Canada by Jefferys, published in 1762, a part of which is found at page 300, History of Minnesota, Pigeon River is marked Nalouagan, or Grosiller River.

On the first of September, 1678, DANIEL GREYSOLON DULUTH left Quebec to continue discovery in the region west of Lake Superior, and in 1680, met an expedition ascending the Mississippi, consisting of SIEUR DACAN and four Frenchmen, besides HENNEPIN, a Franciscan priest, that had been dispatched by LAsALLE.¹

When DULUTH left Minnesota, and returned to Quebec, by way of the Wisconsin River, a Sioux chief drew on birch bark a map of the Mississippi. BELLIN says the earliest map of the region west of Lake Superior, in the Depot de la Marine, was drawn by OTCHAGA, an Indian.

PERROT, "habitant du Canada," who had been, in childhood, educated by the Jesuit missionaries, next appears as an explorer, building Fort St. Nicholas at the mouth of the Wisconsin, and another on the west side of the Mississippi just below Lake Pepin.

In 1687 the first map of the region west and north of Lake Superior, was drawn by FRANQUELIN, an experienced topographer, sent out for the purpose,² and in 1688 a map prepared at Paris by TILLEMONT was issued, and upon it appears Lake Buade (Mille Lacs,) Magdeline (St. Croix River) and Prophet (Snake River).³

LESUEUR, who had come into the country in 1683, with PERROT, built a fort in 1695 above Lake Pepin, on Isle Pelee, a few miles from the mouth of the St. Croix River.

After visiting France, he accompanied BIENVILLE, with the colony for the settlement of Louisiana, and in 1700 ascended the Mississippi, arriving at the mouth of the Minnesota on the 19th of September, and following the course of the stream reached the Blue Earth river, and on the 14th of October had completed a stockade on a small creek called St. Remi, in 44 deg. 13 min. north latitude.

Among those who accompanied him was a shipwright named PENICAUD, a man of discernment, but little scholarship. Returning from the valley of the Minnesota, he passed many years among the tribes of the lower Mississippi. In 1721, leaving a wife in Louisiana, he visited France to receive medical attention for diseased eyes, and while there his adventures among the Choctaws, Natchez and other tribes were written out. CHARLEVOIX in his list of authorities used in writing the History of New France, mentions the manuscript and says that though the style is poor, it contained interesting information.

Early in 1869, the attention of MR. SPOFFORD, Librarian of Congress, was called to the fact that MAISSONEUVE & Co. of Paris, offered a manuscript "Relation of Penicaud" for sale, and during the summer he procured the same. It is a small quarto of 452 pages, divided into 23 chapters, with convenient sub-sections, and relates to the period

1. Relation de la Louisiane, Vol. 5, Recueil de Voyages au Nord.

2. Bellini's "Remarques sur la carte de la Amerique Septentrionale."

3. A copy of this Map is in the New York State Library.

from 1698 to 1721. It appears to have been copied or written out by one FRANCIS BOUET, and that part which pertains to Minnesota is not as full or accurate as LESUEUR's description of the same region in La Harpe's Louisiana. Indeed, some of the statements are at variance with LESUEUR, and appear to be based on HENNEPIN's description.

HENNEPIN, in his "Louisiane," published in 1683 at Paris, speaking of the Saint Croix River, says it is called Tomb River, because the Issati deposited on its banks the remains of a warrior who had died from the poison of a snake. PENICAUD states that it was called the Saint Croix because of a cross planted over the remains of a voyageur, while LESUEUR, the leader of the expedition, asserts that the river was named Saint Croix because a Frenchman of that name was shipwrecked at its mouth.

Again. LESUEUR, according to his journal, did not ascend above the mouth of the Minnesota, and does not mention the Falls of St. Anthony; while PENICAUD, who was of the same party, says he visited them and found the "chute" sixty feet. HENNEPIN had stated that the fall was forty or fifty feet, divided by a pyramidal rock, in 1683; but if the manuscript is correct, in 1700 it was ten feet higher.

CHARLEVILLE, a Canadian and kinsman of GOVERNOR BIENVILLE, told DUPRATZ that he had visited the Falls with two Frenchmen and two Indians, and found the river flowing over a flat rock, and that the chute was only eight or ten feet, a more moderate and reliable statement. He also made a portage, and in a birch bark canoe ascended one hundred leagues beyond, and from information obtained from the Sioux, expressed the opinion that St. Anthony was about equi-distant from the sources and the mouth of the Mississippi.¹

But notwithstanding these seeming discrepancies, PENICAUD is generally accurate. He states, for instance, that in leaving Minnesota early in 1702, he met at the "Ouissconsin," JUSSERAT, a Lieutenant from Montreal, with a party on his way to the *Ouabache*, as the Ohio was called, to establish a tannery, and CHARLEVOIX² states that JUCHEREAU opened an establishment at that locality.

After LESUEUR and PENICAUD left the country, explorations ceased for some years, but in September, 1727, LAPERRIERE DU BOUCHER landed on the shore of Lake Pepin, opposite Maiden's Rock, and erected Fort Beauharnois. The next year VERANDERIE began his discoveries, and in 1734 reached Lake Bourbon, now Winnipeg. His son accompanied him in his explorations.

In 1750, LEGARDEUR DE ST. PIERRE,¹ who had been in command at Fort Beauharnois, was deputed to visit the region to the northwest opened up by the VERANDERIES, and conclude treaties of peace and

1. Le Page DuPratz. Histoire de la Louisiane, Vol. 1, pp. 142-3.
2. Nouvelle France, Vol. 2, p. 266.

commerce. The fort built by VERANDERIE on the Red River was afterwards abandoned because of its nearness to those on the chain of lakes between Winnipeg and Superior.² Following the suggestions of the Frenchmen, CARVER proposed to open a northern route to the Pacific through Minnesota, the valley of the Upper Missouri, over the slope of the Rocky Mountains, and then through the valley of a river which he called the Oregon. A century has elapsed since this Captain of Provincial troops, a native of Connecticut, was in Minnesota, and now the Northern Pacific Railway will soon follow the trail of the voyageur over the grazing grounds of the buffalo, into the defiles of the mountains, and beyond, to Puget's Sound. Whatever the development of the future, the pioneers GROSELLIER, DULUTH, LESUEUR, PENICAUD, and the VERANDERIES should never be forgotten. Towns already bear the name of DULUTH and LESUEUR, and how appropriate would VERANDERIE be for the railway crossing at Red River, or some place in that vicinity.

TRANSLATION OF THE MS.

BY A. J. HILL.

Leaving the fort of the Mississippi,³ M. DE BIENVILLE made us row night and day, and the day after met the vessels, where he consulted with M. DE SURGERES upon the provisions remaining in them, and found that there was more than enough for three months. He then went to the fort at Biloxi to examine the goods and munitions of war in the magazines, and he increased the garrison by sixty Canadians, whom he added to the six hundred of us already there—he had brought them on his ship with M. LE SUEUR. After having embraced M. DE SAUVOLLE and M. DE BOISBRIANT, he left in the month of April of this year, 1700, on his second return to France. On his departure

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1. In 1753, he was stationed in Erie Co., Pa., and held an interview with young Washington.
 2. Bellin also speaks of an abandoned fort near the portage between the St. Croix and Bois Brule' rivers.
 3. A post just established by him and situated eight leagues below English Bend.

he recommended M. DE SAUVOLLE to give M. LE SUEUR twenty men to go with him to a copper mine in the country of the Sioux, a nation of wandering savages living more than nine hundred leagues above the mouth of the Mississippi; and to ascend the river to the Falls of St. Anthony. M. LE SUEUR had heard of this mine some years before whilst traveling in the country of the Ioways, where he traded. I was ordered by M. DE SAUVOLLE to go on this expedition which M. LE SUEUR was going to make, because of my being a carpenter by trade, in the service of His Majesty, and necessary to make and repair shallops. I have always been with all the parties that I have spoken of, and shall speak of afterwards, and thus have been an eye witness. To return to M. LE SUEUR. After he had got together all the necessary provisions and tools and had taken leave of M. DE SAUVOLLE, he set out in the month of April of this year with a single shallop, in which we were but twenty-five persons.

* * * * *

Up to this time no one has discovered the source of the Missouri, any more than that of the Mississippi.

* * * * *

Opposite the mouth of the Wisconsin there are four islands in the Mississippi, and a very high mountain on the left, half a league long. One can go up this river to the portage of the Bay of the Foxes, sixty leagues distant from the Mississippi. This bay¹ comes within four leagues of Lake Michigan, and is the way that the French pass in going to Canada when they return from the Sioux. Above the mouth of the Wisconsin, and ten leagues higher up on the same side, begins a great prairie extending for sixty leagues along the bank of the Mississippi on the right—this prairie is called *Winged Prairie*. The further ends of these prairies reach to the mountains, making a very fine prospect. Opposite to the *Winged Prairie* on the left there is another prairie facing it called *Paquit Janet*,² which is not so long by a great deal. Twenty leagues above these prairies is found lake Good Help, which is seven leagues

1. ORIGINAL. Cette baye s'approche de quatre lieues du lac de Michigan.
 2. The meaning of this word is not apparent. In Marquette's narrative the Missouri has a similar name, Pekitanoui or Pekitanoni. H.

long and one across, and through which the Mississippi passes. To the right and left of its shores there are also prairies. In that on the right, on the bank of the lake, there is a fort which was built by NICHOLAS PERROT, whose name it yet bears. At the end of the lake you come to Bald Island, so called because there are no trees on it. It is on this island that the French from Canada established their fort and store house when they come to trade for furs and other merchandise, and they also winter here because game is very abundant in the prairies on both shores of the river. In the month of September they bring their store of meat there, procured by hunting, and after having skinned and cleaned it, place it upon a sort of raised scaffold near the cabin, in order that the extreme cold which lasts from the month of September to the end of March, may hinder it from corrupting during the winter, which is very severe in that country. During the whole winter they do not go out except for water, when they have to break the ice every day, and the cabin is generally built on the bank, so as not to have to go far. When spring arrives the savages come to the island, bringing their merchandise, which consists of all kinds of furs, as beaver, otter, marten, lynx and many others—the bear skins are generally used to cover the canoes of the savages and Canadians. There are often savages who pillage the French Canadian traders, among others the savages of a village composed of the five different nations, and which have each their own name, that is the Sioux, the people of the big village, the *Mententons*, the *Mencouacantons*, the *Ouyatespony*, and other Sioux of the plains.

Three leagues higher up, after leaving this island, you meet on the right the river St. Croix, where there is a cross set at its mouth. Ten leagues further you come to the Falls of St. Anthony, which can be heard two leagues off. It is the entire Mississippi falling suddenly from a height of sixty feet, making a noise like that of thunder rolling in the air. Here one has to carry the canoes and shallops, and raise them by hand to the upper level in order to continue the route by the river. This we did not do, but having for some time looked at this fall of the whole Mississippi, we returned two leagues below the Falls of St. Anthony to a river coming in on the left of the Missis-

sippi, which is called the river St. Peter. We took our route by its mouth and ascended it forty leagues, where we found another river on the left falling into the St. Peter, which we entered. We called this Green River, because it is of that color by reason of a green earth which, loosening itself from the copper mines, becomes dissolved in it and makes it green. A league up this river we found a point of land a quarter of a league distant from the woods, and it was upon this point that M. LE SUEUR resolved to build his fort, because we could not go any higher on account of the ice, it being the last day of September, when winter, which is very severe in that country, has already begun. Half of our people went hunting, whilst the others worked on the fort. We killed four hundred buffaloes, which were our provisions for the winter, and which we placed upon scaffolds in our fort, after having skinned and cleaned and then quartered them. We also made cabins in the fort, and a magazine to keep our goods. After having drawn up our shallop within the inclosure of the fort, we spent the winter in our cabins.

When we were working on our fort, in the beginning, seven French traders of Canada took refuge there. They had been pillaged and stripped naked by the Sioux, a wandering nation living only by hunting and rapine. Amongst these seven persons there was a Canadian gentleman of M. LE SUEUR's acquaintance, whom he recognized at once and gave him some clothes, as he did also to all the rest, and whatever else was necessary for them. They remained with us during the entire winter at our fort, where we had not food enough for all, except the flesh of our buffaloes, which we had not even salt to eat with. We had a good deal of trouble the first two weeks in getting used to it, having diarrhœa and fever, and being so tired of it that we hated the very smell. But little by little our bodies got adapted to it, so well that at the end of six weeks there was not one of us that could not eat six pounds of meat a day and drink four bowls of the broth. As soon as we were accustomed to this kind of living it made us very fat, and there was then no more sickness amongst us.

When spring arrived we went to work on the copper mine. This was in the beginning of April of this year, [1701.] We

took with us twelve laborers and four hunters. This mine was situated about three quarters of a league from our post. We took from the mine in twenty-two days more than thirty thousand pounds weight of ore, of which we only selected four thousand pounds of the finest, which M. LE SUEUR, who was a very good judge of it, had carried to the fort, and which has since been sent to France, though I have not learned the result.

This mine is situated at the beginning of a very long mountain which is upon the bank of the river, so that boats can go right to the mouth of the mine itself. At this place is the green earth, which is a foot and a half in thickness, and above it is a layer of earth as firm and hard as stone, and black and burnt like coal by the exhalation from the mine. The copper is scratched out with a knife. There are no trees upon this mountain. If this mine is good it will make a great trade, because the mountain contains more than ten leagues running of the same ground. It appears, according to our observations, that in the very finest weather there is continually a fog upon this mountain.

After twenty-two days' work we returned to our fort, where the Sioux, who belong to the nation of savages who pillaged the Canadians that came there, brought us merchandises of furs. They had more than four hundred beaver robes, each robe being made of nine skins sewed together. M. LE SUEUR purchased these and many other skins which he bargained for in the week he traded with the savages. He made them all come and camp near the fort, which they consented to very unwillingly; for this nation, which is very numerous, is always wandering, living only by hunting, and when they have stayed a few days in one place they have to go off more than ten leagues from it for game for their support. They have, however, a dwelling place, where they gather together the natural fruits of the country, which are very different from those of the lower Mississippi, as for instance cherries which are in clusters like our grapes of France, cranberries which are similar to our strawberries but larger and somewhat square in shape, nuts, chokeberries,¹ roots² which resemble our truffles,

1. The *alisse*. 2. *Taupin ambours* in the original.

&c. There are also more kinds of trees than on the lower part of the river, as the birch,¹ maple, plane, and cottonwood, which last is a tree that grows so thick that there are some that are fifteen feet round. As to the trees called maple and plane it is usual at the beginning of March to make notches in them, and then placing tubes in the notches cause the liquid to run off into a vessel placed below to receive it. These trees will flow in abundance during three months, from the beginning of March to the end of May. The juice they yield is very sweet; it is boiled till it turns to syrup, and if it is boiled still more it becomes brown sugar.

The cold is still severer in these countries than it is in Canada. During the winter we passed in our fort we heard the trees exploding like musket shots, being cracked by the rigor of the cold. The ice is as thick as there is water in the river, and the snow is condensed in it. By the month of April all this snow and ice lies on the ground to the depth of five feet, which causes the overflowing of the Mississippi in the spring.

About the beginning of winter in this country, that is to say in the month of September, the bears climb trees that are hollow and hide themselves inside, where they remain from six to seven months without ever leaving, getting no other nourishment during the winter than by licking their paws. When they enter they are extremely lean, and when they go out they are so plump that they have half a foot of fat on them. It is almost always in the cottonwood or cypress that the bear hides himself, because these trees are generally hollow. In hunting them a tree is placed leaning against the tree where the bear is and reaching up to the hole by which he entered. The hunter climbs by this leaning tree to the other one, and throws into the hollow some pieces of dry wood all on fire, which obliges the animal to come out to save himself from being burned. When the bear leaves the hole of the tree he comes down backwards, as a man would do, and then they shoot him. This hunting is very dangerous, for though the animal may be wounded sometimes by three or four gun shots, he will still fall

1. The *merisier*.

upon the first persons he meets, and with a single blow of his teeth and claws will tear you up in a moment. There are some as large as carriage horses, so strong that they can easily break a tree as thick as one's thigh. The nation of the Sioux hunt them very much, using them for food and trading their skins with the French Canadians. We sell in return wares which come very dear to the buyers, especially tobacco from Brazil in the proportion of a hundred crowns the pound; two little horn-handled knives or four leaden bullets are equal to ten crowns in exchange for their merchandises of skins, and so with the rest.

In the beginning of May we launched our shallop in the water and loaded it with this green earth that had been taken out of the mines and with the furs we had traded for, of which we brought away three canoes full. M. LE SUEUR, before going, held council with M. D' ERAQUE, the Canadian gentleman, and the three great chiefs of the Sioux, three brothers, and told them that as he had to return to the sea he desired them to live in peace with M. D' ERAQUE, whom he left in command of Fort L' Huillier, with twelve Frenchmen. M. LE SUEUR made a considerable present to the three brothers, chiefs of the savages, desiring them never to abandon the French. After this we, the twelve men whom he had chosen to go down to the sea with him, embarked. In setting out M. LE SUEUR promised to M. D' ERAQUE and the twelve Frenchmen who remained with him to guard the fort, to send up munitions of war from the Illinois country as soon as he should arrive there; which he did, for on getting there he sent off to him a canoe loaded with two thousand pounds of lead and powder, with three of our people in charge of it.

* * * * *

In this same time¹ M. D' IBERVILLE had sent a boat laden with munitions of war and provisions, to M. DE ST. DENIS, commanding the fort on the bank of the Mississippi. They found there M. D' ERAQUE, who had arrived with the twelve Frenchmen, who remained with him at fort L' Huillier. He came shortly after in the same boat to Mobile, where

1. Spring of 1702.

M. D' IBERVILLE was, whom he saluted, and reported to him that M. LE SUEUR having left him at the fort L' Huillier, had promised him, in parting, to send him from the Illinois country, ammunition and provisions, and that having looked for them a long time without hearing any news of them, he had been attacked by the nations of the Maskoutins and Foxes, who had killed three of our Frenchmen whilst they were working in the woods but two gun shots beyond the fort ; that when the savages had retreated he had been obliged, after having concealed the merchandises he had remaining, and seeing that he was out of powder and lead, to abandon the fort and descend with his people to the sea ; that at the Wisconsin he had met M. JUCHEREAU, criminal judge of Montreal, in Canada, with thirty-five men, whom he had brought with him to establish a tannery at the Wabash ; that he had descended with him to the Illinois where he had found the canoe M. DE BIENVILLE sent him ; that he had arrived in this canoe at the post of M. DE ST. DENIS the night before the boat arrived there ; and that having learned from M. DE ST. DENIS of the arrival of M. D' IBERVILLE he had taken advantage of that opportunity to pay his respects to him, and offer him at the same time his services.

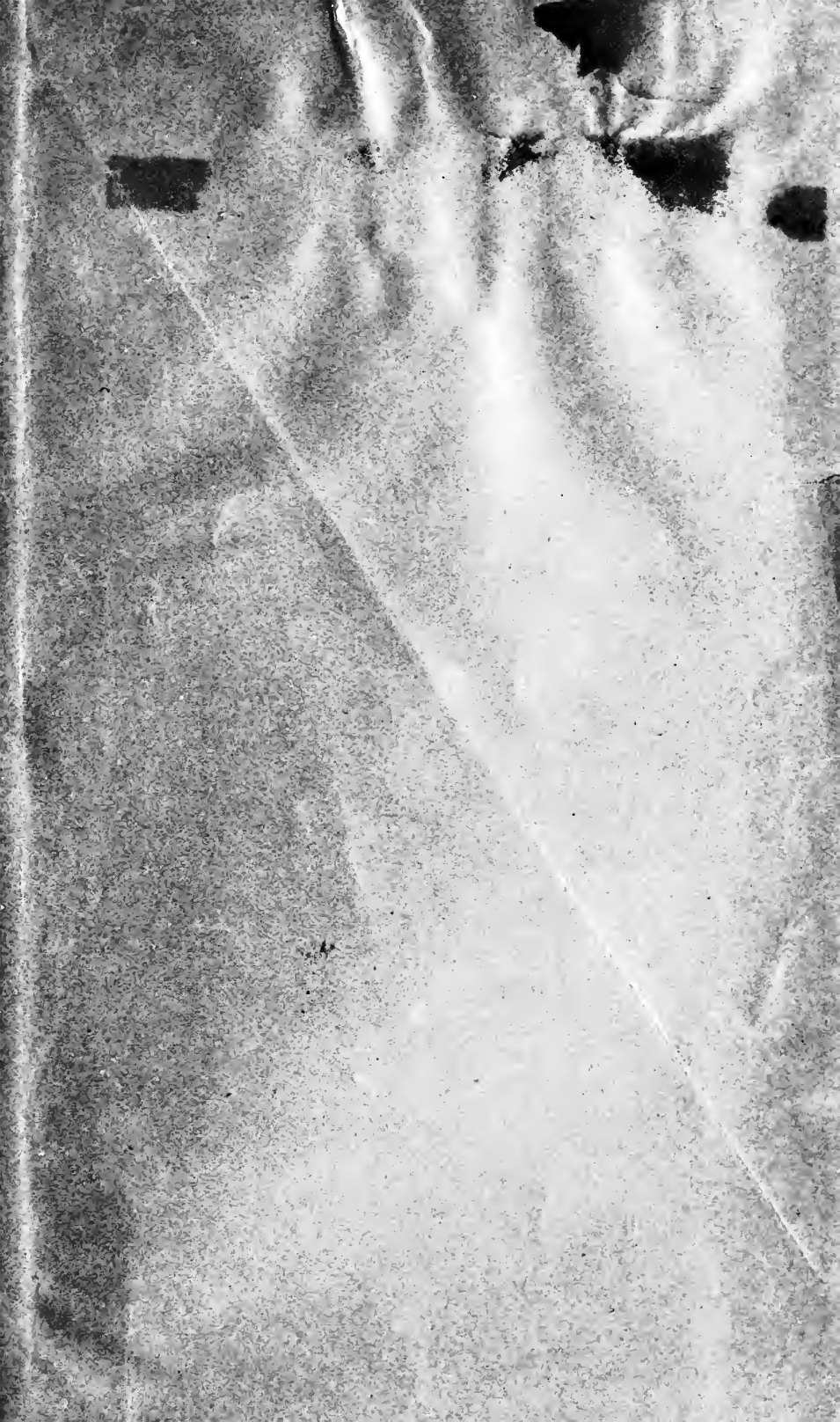
NOTE TO THE FOREGOING.

Explorers and scientific men have searched for LE SUEUR's alleged "copper mine" without success, and pronounce it mythical. See NICOLET, p. 18 ; KEATING, Vol. I, p. 355 ; FEATHERSTONHAUGH, Vol. I, pp. 2 ; 301-305. The account of the latter is so pertinent, we give it, somewhat abridged :

SEPT. 22. [1835.] Soon after 8 A. M. we came to the mouth of the *Mahkatoh*, or "Blue Earth River." This was a bold stream, about 80 yards wide, loaded with mud of a bluish color, evidently the cause of the St. Peter's being so turbid. It was not far from the mouth of this river that M. LE SUEUR was asserted to have discovered in 1692 an immense deposit of copper ore. No traveller had ever entered the river to investigate his statement ; I therefore directed the head of the canoe to be turned into the stream. Having ascended it about a mile, we found a Sissiton family established with their skin lodge

upon a sand bar. * * These people constantly asserted that they knew of no remains of any old fort or stone building in that part of the country. * * * Whilst we were negotiating this exchange, it began to snow for the first time this autumn. * * Pushing on, we passed a singular conical grassy hill on the right bank, which commanded all the vicinity, and appeared to be a likely situation for the site of LE SUEUR's Fort. * * About 12, we came to a fork or branch coming in on our right, about 45 yards broad, and we turned into it, having a well-wooded bluff on the right bank, about 90 feet high. We had not proceeded three-quarters of a mile when we reached the place which the Sissitons had described to us as being that to which the Indians resorted for their pigment. This was a bluff about 150 feet high, on the left bank, and from the slope being much trodden and worn away, I saw at once that it was a locality which for some purpose or other had been frequented from a very remote period. We accordingly stopped there, whilst I examined the place.

As soon as I had reached that part of the bluff whence the pigment had been taken, LE SUEUR's story lost all credit with me, for I instantly saw that it was nothing but a continuation of the seam which divided the sandstone from the limestone, and which I have before spoken of at the Myah Skah, as containing a silicate of iron of a bluish-green colour. The concurrent account of all the Indians we had spoken with, that this was the place the aborigines had always resorted to, to procure their pigment, and the total silence of everybody since LE SUEUR's visit respecting any deposit of copper ore, in this or any other part of the country, convinced me that the story of his copper mines was a fabulous one, most probably invented to raise himself in importance with the French government of that day. CHARLEVOIX having stated that the mine was only a league and three-quarters from the mouth of the Terre Bleu, made it certain that I was now at that locality, and the seam of coloured earth gave the key to the rest. LE SUEUR's account of the mine being at the foot of a mountain ten leagues long, was as idle as the assertion that he had obtained 30,000 lbs. of copper ore in 22 days, for there is nothing like a mountain in the neighborhood. The bluff, to be sure, rises to the height of 150 feet from the river; but when you have ascended it, you find yourself at the top of a level prairie. * * * Finding the copper mine to be a fable, I turned my attention—" &c., &c.—W.



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